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TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU PREL KPAO
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

Media Highlights

FBI Director Mueller Visit Dominates News: Biometrics Top Issue
All papers extensively cover FBI Director's visit to Ankara
yesterday, with many using key messages from a US Embassy press
release in reports. Mainstream Sabah headline reads "FBI Director:
Six Hours, Three Important Meetings" and reports that Mueller met
with Deputy PM Cicek, Justice Minister Ergin and Security Department
Director Koksal to discuss the PKK elements in Northern Iraq, the
situation in Makhmur refugee camp and next steps in the process
after the Treasury Department's sanctions against the three "drug
kingpin" PKK leaders. Sabah notes that Deputy PM Cicek said that
"Mueller reiterated support for cooperation between Turkey and the
US in the fight against terror, but we did not discuss Makhmur and
nuclear issues." Mainstream Aksam headline reads "Either Try Them
or Return to Us" and claims Cicek asked Mueller for closer
cooperation in the extradition of PKK terrorists to Turkey. In an
interview with Aksam, Cicek said he emphasized that all three of the
accused PKK drug smugglers were hiding in Northern Iraq, in an area
under the control of the US. Cicek added that they also discussed
Turkey's preparation of new terror regulations, the establishment of
a public order under secretariat and the draft law concerning the
protection of personal information that is now in parliament. Aksam
also notes that the US Embassy remained silent before the visit, but
yesterday released a statement announcing that the visit focused on
the fight against terror. Liberal Radikal headline on the front
page reads "A Shocking Demand from the US" and, based on information
provided by "high level sources," reports that Mueller asked Turkey
to collect the biometrical data of all people using Turkish airports
and harbors and to share this information with the US to better
monitor terrorists travelling through Turkey. Radikal reports that
the demand was rejected outright by the Turkish side because both
Turkish and EU harmonization laws do not permit compiling of this
kind of information. Most papers referred to the US Embassy press
release in saying that the FBI Director came to Turkey to discuss
ongoing and important cooperation on counter terrorism and
law-enforcement matters. Meanwhile, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet
rebuffed these US assertions for the visit, noting that the "main
issue" was the security of US troops withdrawing from Iraq.

Energy Minister On Cancelled Nuclear Tender; Notes Parris Visit

HaberTurk TV and online website report extensively on remarks by Energy Minister Yildiz at a press conference before an Energy Summit in Ankara. Most of the article is about how Yildiz is expecting the final TETAS decision regarding the cancellation of the nuclear power plant tender before next week's Bayram holiday. HaberTurk also notes that Energy Minister Yildiz confirmed that President Obama's "Special Energy Envoy" Mark Parris arrived yesterday and that they discussed regional issues. Regarding a question on Iran uranium, Minister Yildiz said "We did not say the uranium must be kept in Turkey. If Iran and the UN put a demand in this regard we are going to evaluate it. Our approach on this issue is positive because Turkey has technical capacity."

Iran Rejects Nuclear Deal. Continued coverage in today's newspapers on Iran's rejection of the IAEA nuclear proposal to store LEU in Turkey. Mainstream Sabah headline reads "Iran Doesn't Make Any Effort," saying "Iran blocked the way to the UN's nuclear proposal."

In "A Clear NO from Iran," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet emphasizes the "UN has offered the proposal to overcome the crisis over Iran's nuclear program and Turkey was one of the potential candidates for storing Iranian uranium." Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the headline, "Iran Rejects Demand for Storing Uranium Abroad," and opines "Iran's decision will raise tensions between the sides." In "I Won't Send Uranium," liberal Radikal highlights international reaction saying "France is disappointed with Iran's decision while US indicated that Iran has little time left for a positive reply."

US Model for Presidential Election

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Intellectual/Islamist oriented Zaman and mainstream Hurriyet report that the Council of Ministers adopted a bill that sets up the infrastructure for presidential elections by popular vote for the first time in 2012. Based on the US election model, candidates must have transparent election bank accounts and all income and expenditures during campaigns must be registered in these accounts. No financial assistance will be given from the Treasury. Zaman notes that the 26-article bill is expected to go to parliament soon.

Pundits' Focus: Iraq; Turkish Foreign Policy Direction and Turkey-Armenia Normalization

Prominent Turkish pundits today address a variety of issues mostly through philosophical arguments. In mainstream Hurriyet, Cuneyt Ulsever comments on the growing Turkey, Iraq and the US cooperation, which he believes makes for "the essence of Kurdish initiative." He calls on the government to explain to the public what exactly Turkey has promised to contribute in Northern Iraq/PKK and in the US troop withdrawal process. Semih Idiz of mainstream Milliyet is interested in the aftermath of Iraq war which he believes "despite strongly negative expectations, Turkey has started enjoying economic benefits by increasing trade and cooperation with Iraq."

Milliyet's Kadri Gursel has an objection regarding the Turkey-EU process. He argues that Turkey's engagement in the Alliance of Civilization "is working against Turkey's integration with the EU." His advice is that Turkey stops acting as speaker for the Islamic world, and "focus merely on full democracy and rule of law" instead.

Regarding Turkey-Armenia normalization, panelist Hasan Cemal notes that signing protocol is only a beginning and should be fulfilled by a campaign "to win hearts and minds." Attending a Harvard University panel discussion, Cemal is suggesting that "a liberal debate on genocide and facing up to history" is needed urgently.

GMO Debate: "US Firm Bribed the Agriculture Ministry" (HaberTurk) Mainstream HaberTurk reports that the US authorities identified a bribery case by an American firm while doing business with Turkey in order to promote GMO-engineered cotton seeds. The report claims: "American Capital Board (SEC) examined the documents related to Delta & Pine Land (DPL) company's efforts during the 2001-2007 period in Turkey. SEC concluded that DPL gave bribes to Turkish

agriculture ministry officials while selling genetically modified cotton seeds." The bribery case was also admitted by Monsanto, which took over DPL in 2007 and committed the company to pay 300,000 USD fine to the SEC, the story adds. HaberTurk also tells its readers that the amount of the bribe has not been clearly identified, however there was credible evidence regarding DPL's gratuities to Turkish authorities such as paid travel, refrigerators, computers and office furniture. Talking with the then Director General at the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, HaberTurk quoted the former manager as saying "Let's not forget that we live in Turkey. All companies distribute presents to authorities."

Upcoming events

- November 19: Martti Ahtisaari, chair of the EU's Independent Commission on Turkey is in Ankara and will hold meetings with PM Erdogan,
 - Chief EU negotiator Egemen Bagis, and President Gul.
- November 19: Syrian Parliament Speaker Mahmoud Al-Abrash will meet with Parliament Speaker Sahin and with PM Erdogan
- November 19: PM Erdogan will hold weekly meeting with Chief of the General Staff General Basbug
- November 19: The head of Iraq's Islamic Supreme Council Ammar Al-Hakim will hold talks with PM Erdogan

TV News (CNN Turk)

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Domestic

- Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek inaugurates call center of the Revenue Administration Department
- FM Davutoglu meets AmmarAl-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, to discuss the situation in Iraq

World

- Denmark invites Sudanese leader Omar Al-Bashir to the Copenhagen climate change summit to be held in December.
- Schools in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are closed until December 1 against the swine flu outbreak

JEFFREY